



Oregon Downtown Development Association

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a statewide non-profit assisting communities with
downtown revitalization through
Tools, Training & Technical Assistance.



**How a Main Street's
Self Understanding
& Esteem
Play a Major Role in
its Design Evolution**



**Why think of a
community with
human traits such
as
self-understanding
& esteem?**



Communities ‘act like’ people. They have personalities & traits that offer insight into how they feel about, and understand, themselves.



**Some communities have
a very good self
understanding and
esteem. They know
who they are & how to
proactively approach the
future. They understand
that good urban design
features help support
vibrant & livable
downtowns**



**communities
typically have a
strong civic
engagement &
empowered
citizenry.**

**They know who they
are and what they**

**Carlton,
Oregon: a very
small, rural
community...**



**that absolutely
knows who it is
and what it's
about.**

Carlton's public & private leaders have come together around a long-range vision for their community.





There are also many communities that don't have a good self understanding and/or esteem...they don't know what constitutes good downtown design and/or are willing to 'roll over' for suburban-type development patterns in a traditional downtown setting.



They may support a suburban model for downtown that includes:

- **Overly wide travel lanes**
- **Lots of access points and curb cuts (drive-thrus & more!)**
- **Holes in the urban fabric w/surface parking lots**
- **Buildings that are set-back behind parking lots**
- **Elimination of on-street parking**



**They may be
pressured by
developers, mistaken
by the perception of
a downtown parking
problem, or simply
don't have the
political will to say,
*“we deserve better.”***







**These communities
need assistance in
gaining an
understanding of how
good design helps
improve a downtown;
how to rally around a
shared vision; and how
they deserve to “be
all that they can be”**



However,
the communities
that need it most,
are often the most
difficult to work
with.



**As planners,
designers, engineers,
etc., it is important to
help a community
understand the
importance of good
urban design & how it
will have positive long-
term impacts.**

How?

- Show visual examples from other towns
- Use *When a Highway Runs Through It* to help explain concepts
- Have locals do visual preference 'work'





- Talk in terms of how design decisions will have long-term effects
- Discuss the concepts of community self-esteem
- Engage community champions to help move concepts

HOW ?

- Talk about the downtown in a holistic way...good urban design is only *one* component that supports a healthy central business district





Vicki's Tips:

- **Don't die on every hill...pick 'battles' carefully**
- **Try to respect a community's decision after it has 'the facts'**



- Dare a community to dream big, then achieve the dream, because they deserve it
- Try & not lose your sense of humor...think about this in the bigger scheme of